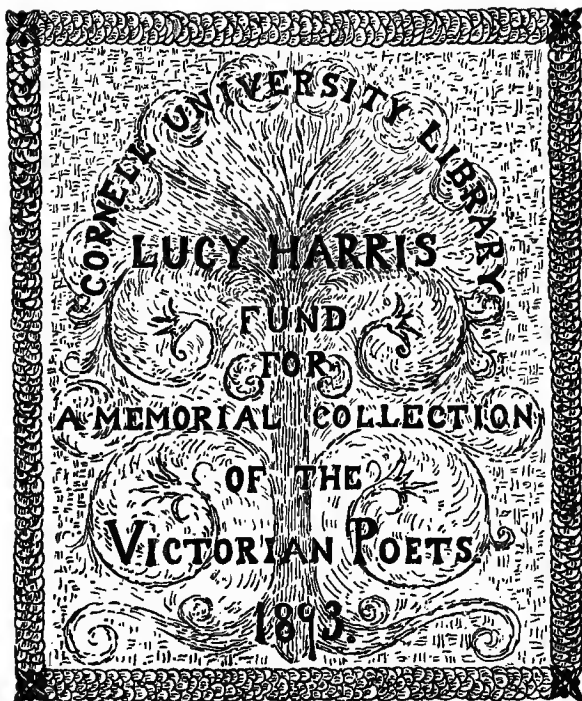


P O E M S
CHIEFLY COMPOSED DURING
1882 - 83.

BY
JOSEPH SYKES





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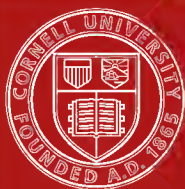
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POEMS.

POEMS :

CHIEFLY COMPOSED DURING 1882-83.

11/12/

BY

JOSEPH SYKES.

(JULIO).

6

BRIGHTON :

PRINTED BY J. G. BISHOP, "HERALD" OFFICE.

1883.

A.174509

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POEMS.

THE CONCEPTION OF DEATH AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THOUGHT.

I. THE CLASSICAL EPOCH.

FIRST lesson to mankind! that fleeting breath
Must yield to the extinguisher of death!
Unwelcome, doubtless, for each instinct gives
Joy in the present that so brightly lives.
Ages rolled on, and high philosophy
Aspired the hidden cause of all to see.
In mortal issues principles it sought
And wide experience to that centre brought.
Vain was the search, for e'en the wisest mind
Is to the mist-enshrouded future blind—
Better to leave poetic fancy's play
Enwreath with flowers of mortal steps the way.
If all that charms must cease, *then*, to enjoy
Is wiser than with cares our peace destroy.

Then to this picture accessories came :
Life's torch exhaled its fragrant breathing flame ;
The classic porch, the temple's faultless shrine,
Made man's existence vividly to shine ;
The athlete's struggle ; mimic war's alarm ;
All that could sense indulge or fancy charm.
The courtesan, with her accomplished art,
In classic Greece formed of man's life a part ;
The palm of eloquence, the poet's crown,
The victor's triumph, whilst applause rained
down.

* * * * *

Thought travelled onwards, and an emblem
showed

How all that lives must bear its destined load.
A youth, with torch extinguished, gave the sign
That each, in turn, must vital force resign ;
And yet again, by Nature's power renewed,
That torch, relighted, burns still unsubdued.
The myth had beauty, 'twas a symbol rare
Of those dread forces which no mortal spare ;
Yet which, with vigour's sap renewed, shall rise,
And struggle onwards to ambition's prize,

Climb wisdom's pinnacle, or joyous play
In grove where Syrens wile the hours away !
From out mortality fresh life will start,
And thus renewed will play its destined part.
Great scheme of being, heralding the way
To progress, flashing into brighter day !
And many, doubtless, happy were, who saw
Life bloom beneath great Nature's flexile law.
Theirs was the Temple, and the Forum's life,
And all th' exciting turns of party strife !
Closed by a night of calm and solemn sleep,
Where no obtrusive echoes vigil keep,
And then Elysian fields for good and great,
From Pluto's darksome realms redeemed by
Fate.

* * * * *

Go back to Athens, 'neath a southern sky,
Gazing on temples' faultless symmetry,
Whilst Oratory's triumphs thrilled the ear,
And fateful Drama's lines resounded clear,
Life rolled its course in waves of sunny light,
Though death's cloud hovered like impending
night—

For none escape the stern decree of Fate,
That power above the gods, immaculate !
Survey the Roman, with his sterner mould
And tougher fibre ; enterprising, bold ;
Death's shadow is to him an enemy
To dare in combat, nor ignoble flee.
Virtue is courage ; he the noblest man
Who meets his fate with constancy of plan ;
His aim, a mind that knows no trace of fear,
E'en when the dreaded image hovers near.
Hellenic intellect refined the theme,
Investing death with attributes that seem
Like olives' foliage in their sombre grace,
Whilst sun-set glories lights and shadows trace.
Each through the medium of his feelings sought
To teach the mind to reason as it ought ;
Life's gifts to prize, and, when the moment
came,
All to resign—as sinks the expiring flame.
“ Ask for a soul that knows not fear of death.”
A noble prayer ; for the mind cherisheth
Regrets too oft for pleasure that deceives,
Or for some fancied good unwisely grieves.

Make man immortal. Say, what should we find ?
A stunted race, degenerately blind
To progress—evil dominant, and nought
Of new-born energy to graft on thought—
Impunity of selfishness, and all
The ills increased which higher natures thrall.
No strong, fresh current, sweeping weeds away,
No darkness vanquished by the new-born day ;
For some, th' epicurean's paradise,
Crowded with all a worldly taste finds nice—
Sense ever treading in the same dull round,
By circle of its dim perceptions bound—
But for the many, labour, care, and pain,
And toil for bread, so often sought in vain !
Contempt of life, to serve one's country's cause,
Was the ideal aimed at by the laws
Of those old classic lands, and fruit it bore,
As Codrus proved, and patriot heroes, more
Than memory counts, for all had not the lot
In deathless record ne'er to be forgot.
Yes ! and the feeling still survives—its call
Sends forth the thousands who relinquish all
Life's pleasures blooming 'neath a sunny sky
That their land's banner may victorious fly ;

The point of honour, too, in many a land,
Bids once-joined friends in mortal combat stand.

* * * * *

To some the term of life seems all too late,
Madly they rush nearer to bring its date.
Unequal, biting ills or shame to bear,
When mis-directed passions bring despair.
Disgust will come when pleasure's fruit is pressed
Too eagerly, and all its juice expressed.
Nought then remains but to desert the scene
Where all seems brown, that once was budding
green.

A false philosophy, in truth, yet one
That has its specious side when pleasure's gone.
It may be well for youthful minds to scan
The classic writer's estimate of man.
Whose lines, immortal, breathe of sunny skies
And that instinctive cheerfulness which lies
O'er lapping gloom-fraught estimates of life,
Its doubtful future and its present strife ;
And so beyond that mist-clad land forlorn,
A larger creed insensibly is born.

* * * * *

Survey the past ; how man has left his trace
Where erst stretched out but lonely Nature's
space.

The pyramids, the temples of the East,
The buried cities, thro' whose streets had ceased
For centuries the tread and voice of man,
Once so exuberant in Life's daily plan ;
We see of time the awful besom sweep,
As generations o'er destruction weep.

2. THE CHRISTIAN EPOCH.

THE view is changed—as centuries have
rolled,

A new-born creed its symbol doth unfold ;
Simple at first—the human and divine
In close embrace their elements combine.
But soon, with lapsing years, fresh legends
came,

Engrafted on devotion's purer flame ;
For priests oft rule by fear, in place of love,—
A surer plan, as facts abundant prove.

The Cross upreared o'er divers nations reigns,
And Orthodoxy dooms eternal pains,
And tortures dire to minds that will not bend.
The mediæval chieftain, near his end,
Bequeaths broad lands to swell the Church's
power,
And claims its pardon for his dying hour ;
But bolder spirits compromise disdain
Nor care to buy immunity from pain ;
So, bit by bit, obstructive barriers fall.
A Church, enlarged, grants liberty to all
From certain bonds—so Orthodoxy lies
Supine—yet in the newer creed will rise
Intolerance to limit purer thought,
And dogma, somewhat changed, is forward
brought.
All Churches covet influence, and we find
Fresh chains are forged to check the enquiring
mind.
All do not yield, and many close their life
Far from the mists of theologians' strife.
The creed of terror, too, was oft received
Reluctantly by some who still believed.
Be orthodox or lost, *one* Church had said,
Striving conformity around to spread.

'Tis hard to differ when the law's stern hand
Compels obedience from an awe-struck land ;
When prison's torture, or the faggots' flame
Form bulwarks that fence in Religion's name.

* * * * *

See the ascetic in his rugged cell,
Whilst self-denial's emblems round him dwell—
The scull—the crucifix—a crust of bread,
On hardest couch the coarsest raiment spread ;
Yet throbs his heart with pious ecstasy,
Longing for death to set his spirit free—
And realizes, in his lonely life,
How great the boon that closes mortal strife.
And thus we find, strange though the problem
seem,
To the same goal those diverse currents stream.
The Stoic's pride, he who voluptuous pressed
The fruit of pleasure to his glowing breast ;
The sturdy Roman, the more changeful Greek ;
The Anchorite, whose contemplations seek
The mystic essence of all faith to scan ;
Each finds, in death, the appointed bourne for
man.

Yet, as the instincts of the human mind
Can never to the beautiful be blind,
The classic legends live, in deathless bloom,
Environing man's life-path and his tomb ;
Whilst Art from ancient models takes its spring,
Associations ceaseless influence bring.
And thus, to many, Death the emblem wears,
Which classic lore and students' culture shares.
Man's cheerful feelings, in spontaneous flow,
Fly from the picture of unending woe ;
Impulsively rejecting hopeless doom,
They cling to classic taste in freshest bloom ;
Where when, at length, the fated days arrive,
In life's arena never more to strive,
The curling smoke from fragrant pyre ascends,
And with man's ashes choicest perfume blends !
A fitting close, when fall the shades of night,
To many a day of culture, art, and light.
Cremation ! outcome of enlightened thought,
Yet with simplicity of purpose fraught.
Fire that destroys, yet renovates life's plan,—
When Nature's secrets were revealed to man.
The fabled Titan, heaven-born flame imparts,
And kindred sparks flash out from human hearts ;

So, at the close, Death's purifying flame
Leaves but some ashes, and perchance a name !
Yet may we venerate that higher law,
Which ardent minds in deep abstraction saw,
Where mystic love and prescience combine,
And faith's unlimited perspectives shine.
Where man, the victor of his passions, stands,
And silent prays with meek uplifted hands.
Shall this be all ? to fix the mighty date,
The world's new era calmly contemplate !
Our children teach to count the years that fly.
And calculate from Anno Domini !
No ! this is but the husk, the *outer* rind,
Within some pregnant lessons we may find—
How changed the world, informed by purer
 breath
And hopes of future joys which conquer death ;
Yet was the victory but half complete.
'Mid changing creeds, the world to some is
 sweet ;
Excitement's trumpet sounded far and near,
As energy made active purpose clear.
Pageants of mediæval chivalry,
With valiant Knights in splendid panoply ;

The solemn pomp of sacerdotal reign,
From Rome diverging over land and main.
All these appealed to pride or pampered sense
On life's horizon, glowing and intense !
So Death, the enemy, remains, whose knife
Severs the throbbing impulses of life ;
Congeals the blood, when in its freest course,
Ambition, pleasure, yielding to its force.

* * * * *

When Art revived, 'twas classic thought which
gave
Its seal to imagery of the grave ;
As sculptured features, in their last repose,
Looked calmly down on human toil and woes.
Sleep had they won at last—inanimate,
Patient they look for final stroke of Fate,
From noble monuments exposed to view,
The feelings, thus inspired, yet wider grew ;
So letters spread at large the classic seed,
And Art won triumphs for the ancient creed !
The fear of death full oft its spell has wrought
On timid souls, who peace of conscience
sought—

Not without reason, when the mind surveys
The unrolled ribbon of past careless days ;
So much of self-indulgence, and so rare
The moments owned by virtue's fostering care.
When man beholds the spectre of regret
Emerge from mists, ere sun of life be set,
Round which remorse in serpent coils will lie
Stretched on the rugged shore of destiny.
And wiser minds for much that's lost may
mourn,

As hopes, like autumn leaves, are onward borne.
Health, friends, affection of a child or wife,
The hundred forms that people active life ;
Labour's proud task, or fancy's lighter play,
Binding with silken cords the circling day ;
Yet must we feel the justice of a doom,
Which metes impartially to all the tomb—
Which levels, rectifies man's diverse state,
Whether we call it Providence or Fate.
This truth, revealed to poet and to sage,
Conspicuous shines in many a classic page.

* * * * *

Yet still a purer creed will hope inspire,
As flame bursts from the murky smoke of fire.

All is not finished here—immortal man
May enter on a new progressive plan ;
Pervading love redeems the human race,
As pardon's voice resounds through endless
space.

Creed of the future—mystery sublime,
Soaring on radiant wing o'er gulf of time ;
Including, not exterminating power,
Almighty greatness, crowned with mercy's dower ;
Disdaining commonplace of verbal strife,
That creed adores the sun of light and life ;
Whilst hope immortal, of divinest school,
Exults in pardon's all-embracing rule.



DETACHED THOUGHTS.

I.

WHEN rich wine bubbles in the quaint-
shaped glass,
And your fair neighbour some remark may pass,
With half a promise in her lustrous eyes,
On which you glance with throbbing, glad
surprise,
How sweetly pass the hours! The morrow
dawns,
And *then* reaction comes with mem'ry's thorns.
Where'er you turn, in head or heart, is pain,
And occupation yields to languor's reign.

II.

Tis a rare gift, when Pleasure's syren voice
Is heard, to pause for meditative hour ;

And, upward soaring, exercise your choice
On toilsome paths where craggy summits
tower ;
Leaving below your feet the mists that cloud
The valley, where men's efforts idly stray ;
Piercing, by force of will, Convention's shroud,
From mount of Truth a clearer view survey.

III.

Happy the young, who stand on Time's fair slope,
Hearing the distant murmur of Life's sea !
Happy the old, who realize the scope
Of sterling work, accomplished faithfully !
Some good for future generations done ;
A mark affixed above Time's shifting shore ;
Where hope is radiant as the mid-day sun,
With energies renewed in boundless store.

IV.

He paused beneath the welcome shade—
It was a day of glorious light—

And while his wandering steps were stayed,
Below him lay a vista bright.

And, as he mused, perchance there came
Voluptuous images, that yield
A fragrant, incense-bearing flame
Of passion lighting up the field ;

The perfect balance of the mind,
When health and temperance unite ;
And where, on glancing round, we find
No jarring contrast mar our sight.

Too brief such moments : life's dark sea
Already curls its waves in foam ;
Such calm can but a respite be
For pilgrims who mid tempests roam.

Quick he descends the sloping hill—
A man whom duty's claims enthral ;
Where higher thoughts the bosom fill
With sympathy for each and all !

V.

How wide, in youth, doth life's horizon seem,
Of passion, will, and action, as we dream !
Yet of the view each year some portion's past,
Till but a couch and tomb remain at last.

VI.

Happy the worker who has won repose,
Life's plan fulfilling since his birth-star rose !
Each year to find on higher ground his name,
And nearer scent the breeze from mount of fame.

VII.

Some seek to win the prize without the strain
Which life exacts in toil, renewed again ;
These creep along, reposing in the shade.
Others are dust-stained, panting, yet afraid,
Near though they be, to scale the final hill,
Reserved for those whose efforts serve their will.

With force matured they gain the victor's crown,
Whilst quivering limbs the toils they've passed
will own.

VIII.

(RHYMED ELEGIACS.)

Would you an orator be, and sway men's minds
at your pleasure ?

Learn when speaking to feel all that to others
you say.

Would you as poet excel, and reach art's loftiest
measure ?

Study the boundary line 'twixt what *has* been
and what *may*.

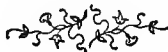
Men would you lead ? First learn to probe
their feelings at leisure,

Till all depths of the heart clearly at last you
pourtray.

IX.

'Tis wise to feel that greatness oft is wanting
In fullest tide and glare of mere success ;
Somewhat that lacks of that immortal planting,
Which fruit will bear when crowds no longer
press.

Foolish is he who cynically scorns
The simple pleasures that at hand may be,
Or purer feelings which no crown adorns :
To such the ideal fails in symmetry.
Friendship entails a risk too great to try ;
Affection's harvest will neglected lie.



LOVE'S DAWNING.

I.

OFT have we met that girl, yet ne'er till now
 Did the impression strike upon our sense ;
 Oft have we gazed upon her ample brow—
 Serene and free from fashion's vain pretence.

II.

She was but one in a parterre of flowers,
 Of graceful aspect, with a winning charm ;
 In whose glad presence swiftly fled the hours,
 In heart's content, yet fenced around by calm.

III.

Now all is changed, and by a glance revealed,
 The electric spark of passion strikes the heart,
 No more, by prim convention's mask concealed,
 Can we with feigned politeness play our part.

IV.

All else seems tame ; one star alone doth shine ;
Desire has come with flutterings of doubt.
Can we succeed, or must we inly pine,
Whilst bolder spirits victory's pæan shout ?

V.

Much that we lack do these perchance possess—
A calm and stately mien, proclaiming force.
Woman will oft a master's glance confess,
And in submission steer her willing course.

VI.

Still must we strive to win ! naught else remains ;
Our being's longings to this task are bound ;
For jealousy, with all its racking pains,
Knavs at our heartstrings in a ceaseless
round

VII.

Of torture. Rugged, truly, is the road
Which natures sensitive must travel o'er ;

Bedewed by tears for days, free from the load
Of care—that bright and flower-enamelled
shore !

VIII.

And yet, when age draws near, man ofttimes
mourns

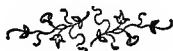
E'en for the stormy shore his course has left.
Fair were the flowers, though girt around by
thorns ;

The view is tame, of passion's crags bereft !



Life gives but fragments : Youth a heart that
quakes ;

Age the deep shadow which no sunlight breaks.



YOUTHFUL AMBITION.

HOW bright those dreams of glory and
success,

Glory of chief to victory who leads ;
Of orator, whose hearers must confess
He is the man a nation's crisis needs.

Of artist, who from Nature culls her best,
And all ennobles by the Ideal's power ;
Of passion paints the strife, or scenes of rest,
Steeps in a calm round which no storm-clouds
lower.

Of poet, whose conception moulded lies,
Each part dilating into perfect form ;
Or when the drama's scene is hailed by cries
And voices blend into excitement's storm.

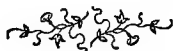
Such is the vision, as the future lies
Unwrought, yet possible, in Nature's womb ;

Youth muses, lonely, or perchance he flies
Hopes to confide in all their vernal bloom.

Life's struggle comes; alas ! how poor the scene,
How many counter influences jar ;
Mean the result to what it might have been,
The prize so small to what it seemed afar !

Yet should we ne'er forget how hope adorned
Those days with actual and vivid light ;
That good was ours, and never should be scorned,
E'en when our cherished longings fade from
sight.

'Tis false philosophy to count the weeds,
And pass the flowers that round our path have
bloomed ;
They *did* ennoble life ; each hour that speeds
Reaps its own harvest though its course be
doomed !



NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1882.

ANOTHER year! From out Time's mystic
urn

This ball is sent for human hands to roll !
None may the guerdon negligently spurn ;
It comes triumphant over man's control.
So, as we calculate the months' return,
And, wondering, ask what is the final goal ?
Once more we enter on the mixed domain
Of pleasure and its sterner rival—pain.

Of both the seeds on mortal path are strewn,
Just ready to develop into life ;
The common lot, some may, reluctant, own,
Has elements of peace as well as strife ;
But the proportions vary,—for, alone,
Some must confront adversity's sharp knife ;
Whilst *others* drone in luxury and ease,
Their daily task—their wayward selves to please.

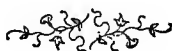
Yet none escape unscathed ; for black *ennui*
Twin-born with lassitude dark days oppress ;
They who all work eschew can never see
Visions of well-earned rest, the mind to bless—
None can escape from Nature's symmetry,
Yet many in their secret thoughts confess
They'd like more joy and merriment and fun,
Ere the year's heavy task has well begun.

Yet look around—our wandering steps indent
Their pathway on Time's vast and silent
shore ;
If our past years have oft to folly leant,
Braced for our work, we vacillate no more ;
On this bright morn, perchance, is message sent,
Warnings which sophistry can ne'er bridge
o'er ;
So, may the opening of another year,
Girt, by hope's rainbow hues, sublime appear.

Yet of the varied interests of mankind,
Who dares to prophesy the ebb and flow ?
Nations are stirred—of party strife the blind
And erring impulse wanders to and fro.

Will faction's rage decline, to peace resigned,
Nor longer strike for anarchy the blow ?
Will Hellas bloom again, as in the age
When art and letters shone on history's page ?

How vain to question that which hidden lies !
How futile to explore land bathed in night.
We listen to the evening breeze that sighs,
But what the morn may bring evades our
sight.
Despair not of the future's glorious prize,
This year may see the victory of right.
No oracle he needs, who'll careful scan
Affinities of Nature and of man.



ON READING C. BAUDELAIRE'S
FLEURS DU MAL.

YES, "flowers of evil," such there are,
Produce of man's perverted heart,
Which leave life's nobler paths afar,
And feel of meaner pains the smart.

Such flowers in darksome corners bloom,
Shunning the rays of heaven-born light ;
Fit but to deck a nameless tomb,
When pleasure's sun has sunk in night.

Some from corruption's relics spring,
And lure the wanderer to destroy ;
Some borne aloft on fancy's wing,
Give empty mimicry of joy.

Some deck themselves with passion's mask,
Seeking to grasp the strange and new ;
Some more degraded can but ask
Admittance 'mid the vilest crew.

Ennui, satiety, that calls
On all creation to supply
That nameless void of sense that palls,
And naught that's noble can descry.

Too true the picture, if we seek
Where foulest thought and action lies,
When every blush has left the cheek,
And man has lost all wish to rise.

But why, O poet, shouldst thou lead
Thy readers on such mud-stained track ;
On garbage foul why make him feed,
No warning voice to call him back ?

Could he be happy, he who wrote
Page upon page so drear and sad,
A mariner in lonely boat,
On turbid ocean of the bad ?

The venal love that brings disgust,
The thought half sensual, half stern,
Poor fleeting pleasures laid in dust,
Where passion's embers dimly burn.

And worse than these, the fell desire
To labour in the cause of ill,
Where flowers of evil girt by fire,
Make circles ever widening still.

That conflagration spreads around,
And charred remains its progress show,
A patch of desolated ground
On which no healthy plant can grow.

Yet near the forest glade extends,
Birds, too, are singing in the trees,
And vegetation's richness blends,
Wafting its odours on the breeze.

All is not bad, as many say,
Near evil's haunts bright virtue lives,
And Nature, with benignant sway,
Her treasured stores of blessings gives.

* * * * *

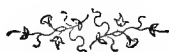
The fatalism here we find,
Grasping of vice the endless chain,
Where ever circling instincts blind,
Ne'er hope their freedom to regain.

Revolt against th' eternal law
That bids our nature higher rise,
Pictured by one who keenly saw
The haunts where evil's banner flies.

Talent of sculptor that reveals
From marble's grain the struggling thought ;
Talent of painter's hand that feels
Bright flame of colour near him brought—

Are lavished on this hideous theme,
Of evil the immense domain,
Nature and Art, the servants seem
Of frenzied joys, enwreathed with pain.

Yet may we hope some purer thought
These ghastly visions glanced between,
And that such fiery struggles wrought,
At tempest's close, a sky serene.



REVERIE.

SPIRITS depressed, mysterious law
Oft warning, ere the blow may fall,
As though our instinct dimly saw,
Or heard, through gloom, of Fate the call.

The wiser man accepts the sign,
Half-furling sail on life's swift barque,
Exulting hopes their place resign,
As chastened thoughts their impress mark.

Her flaunting banner joy will drop,
To trifling, earnest thoughts succeed,
From pleasure's tree we branches lop,
Calm and content seem all we need.

And thus when flows life's tide again,
And bears us on its crested wave,
We reap the harvest of our pain,
And higher aims from folly save.

STRUGGLES.

EAT and digest, then sleep and see
If aught more precious life can give ;
No struggles *then* are felt, to free
The space where lower interests live.

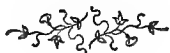
Some wakeful night, a warning voice
Calls us from fancy's realm to fact ;
In nearness now is placed the choice,
Idly to dream, or earnest act.

Thenceforth our bark has left the shore,
Storm-tossed on many a foaming wave ;
Life's tranquil haven seen no more,
No cliffs from tempest's fury save.

But, look, sublime there beams a light,
Flashing its ray from Truth's far hill ;
Yet oft it mocks our straining sight,
And seems to grow more distant still.

Thousands will never reach that strand,
Engulphed 'neath ocean's restless flow.
Pilgrims are few who touch the land,
And stains of toil their aspects show.

Yet strive we must, if but to leave
The rank morass of low desires
(Whose phantom lights men's hearts deceive)
For heights to which the soul aspires.



TYRANNY OF INCLINATION.

THE headstrong boy, who late returns to
school,

Or illness feigns to avoid impending task ;
The young collegian who will never ask
Who burdens bear, so *he* may play the fool :
All such o'er life give *inclination* rule,
Whilst they in pleasure's fitful sunshine bask.

The man mature in love caprice who feels,
Or seeks in gambling for excitement's day,
Where horses dash past crowds absorbed or
gay ;
Or where in lamp-lit halls the croupier deals,
And spendthrift's brain with mad excitement
reels,
Careless if his estate his debts can pay.

*

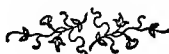
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All such reverse perspective of life's plan,
Where *duty* 's placed as keystone of the arch,
Through which their footsteps should obedient
march,
Who seek to win the prize proposed to man,
And action's motives with discernment scan,
Careless of pleasure as for truth they search.



CLASSIC VIEWS OF AGE.

WHEN first, in youth, the enquiring student
stands

In fair domain of ancient classic thought,
And claims the glorious privilege that some
Deem too unpractical for daily life ;
When on the course to fortune's prize we pant,
He finds two pictures, shewn by master-hands,
Depicting features of declining age—
One is the Satirist's ; he* tells us how
In age the senses languish, and the mind
Hears but the feeble echo of past joys :
Whilst varied torments of disease assail
The sinking energies of feeble frame,
Unapt for throb of love or toil of war,
Whilst passions moulder in their grim decay !
Desire surviving execution's power.

* Juvenal, Sat. 10.

Saddest of all how cherished friends depart,
Leaving the pilgrim in his solitude—
A picture realistic, stern, and sad.

* * * * *

But classic student reads not this alone :
Another exposition, ample, grand,
Sounds like a silver trumpet in his ears !
With noble thoughts enshrined in cadenced
phrase,
Cicero tells us of the charms of age.
Crowned with the wreath of high philosophy.
Thanks, Roman, for this legacy to all,
For thou wert not a contemplative man,
Dwelling apart in distant halls of thought,
But one who mingled in the busy crowd,
And swayed the minds of thousand citizens
Of greatest empire that the world hath seen,
With eloquence that lives throughout all time.
This great philosopher and orator,
This man of action, Consul, Senator,
Has left this noble eulogy of age,
Endowed with calmness and serene content !
Yet must we own that thousands lead a life

Ending in age, meet for the Satirist
To vent his cynical contempt upon ;
Their manhood passed in crowded haunts where
few

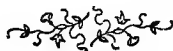
Are wedded to pursuit of worthy ends,
But cultivate excitement as their aim,
To cheat, as best they can, that fiend *ennui*.
Whether they swell the crowd, where day by day
Excited voices, sounding far, proclaim
The current odds on every coming race,
Or watch, through long-drawn hours, the shift-
ing cards,

Or haunt some boudoir, where the courtesan,
Stamped with the current mark of fashion's seal,
Receives admirers in a *negligée*,
Formed to entrance the senses of her slaves !
Some join the revel of intemperance,
Where thought is fevered, vague, and indistinct,
Like shifting sand-heaps on the desert's waste.
Some more correct, meander in the maze
Of fashion, all their energies consumed
In gaudy temple of frivolity.
For such what honourable age can crown
The flood of manhood's stormy passions, when

The hour has sounded for enforced repose !
Their later years, haunted by vain regrets,
Whose crape, o'er all suspended, mars the view ;
For such the Roman Satirist has launched
The scorn that withers, and the truth that burns.

* * * * *

May we, ere the last scene of life shall close,
Follow the counsel of Rome's Orator
With clearer hope drawn from a nobler creed.



THE MODERN POLITICIAN.

IN THREE GLIMPSES.

I.

STATESMEN are fettered ; Politicians may
Cage and retain that fluttering bird To-day,
Choosing some party watchword for their cry,
Then boldly bid for popularity !
Talent they need of supple, dext'rous kind,
To no fresh current of opinion blind ;
Topics they plausibly reiterate,
Know when to check and when prolong debate ;
In short, you want a pretty able man,
Who'll work unwearied on determined plan.

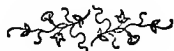
II.

Go ask that veteran how he climbed to power ?
If candid, he may thus reply, " My friend,
Success is oft of trifling gifts the dower,
Which small apart, harmoniously blend ;

Yet may one strive in vain, if fortune's shower
Do not its fertilizing influence lend ;
So, bit by bit, an edifice is reared,
Which, at the first, impossible appeared."

III.

Our Politician says, as party man
My chief I follow through each mazy plan—
All I applaud, down to his weakest acts,
And even fancies I accept as facts !
Have you observed, my friend, how in a field,
Each sheep will to its leader service yield,
And follow blindly ; so, in party strife,
Do you accept this model for your life ?



THE CUP OF TEA, WITH A GLANCE
AT MOCHA.

O POTENT lever to the struggling thought,
When, fumes of yesternight just passed
away,
Again we welcome the returning day
In ceaseless occupation's network caught.

The sportsman mounts his hack for covert side,
Hoping that what has been again may be :
A glorious run from every drawback free,
Good scent, fair fences, men who're bound to
ride.

The merchant leaving his luxurious home,—
As his fair wife the fragrant offering pours,—
To speculation's glitt'ring summit soars,
And thoughts, to bold conceptions reaching,
roam.

To the desponding lover has the post
Some hurried lines, then, doubly welcome,
brought :

All is not lost ; an interview is sought ;
His passion will surmount obstruction's host.

His tea is sipped ; and hope still brighter grows,
And many a weary sufferer, whose pain,
Through lengthened hours of night, sought
rest in vain,
Finds in that morning draught a late repose.

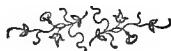
Many a toiler, too, has respite found,
And hope once more hath shed its healing
ray,—
Refreshed, he starts, less rugged seems the
way,
His footsteps tread at length on firmer ground.

* * * * *

Yet none may Mocha's fragrant juice disdain,
Wherein the glowing Eastern fancy lives,
Which to the Sage deep contemplation gives,
Or cheers the Arab on the thirsty plain ;

Or when, the splendid banquet's courses o'er,
The guests await digestion's magic power,
Inspired by thee, how sweetly flows the hour
In conversation's ever-varied store.

Yet tea, perchance, embodies subtler force,
Bound with so many tender feelings, where
Sweet home-born influences fill the air,
And launch us on our duty's daily course.



EXCITEMENT.

I.

GODDESS of wild dishevelled hair,
With fatal beauty's gifts endowed,
In every age men found thee fair,
And prostrate falls th' admiring crowd.

II.

And yet, what ruin hast thou wrought,
What high-born hopes eclipsed by night,
What bold aspiring spirits brought
To grope their way in flickering light ?

III.

For when thy radiant form is veiled,
How drear the path that man must tread ;
The light is gone, our hope has failed,
In joy no more we raise our head.

IV.

The shout that tells of victory
Of athlete's force or hard-won race ;
The Syren's glance of witchery,
From bowers whence few their steps retrace.

V.

The hall illumed by vivid light,
Where heaps of gold symmetric rise ;
And all seems beautiful and bright,
With glances from Hetaira's eyes.

VI.

Such are the toils which thou hast spread,
For hearts impulsive, when each day
Makes the blood course in throbbing head,
And sober thought is cast away !

VII.

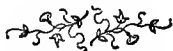
Fly then, O youth, from fatal slope,
So easy to descend, so hard
To mount again, bereft of hope,
With struggling toil, each member scarred !

VIII.

Look up where Duty's temple stands,
Though steep the mist-encircled way,
Though fairer seem those sunny lands,
'Mid blooming flowers, where idlers stray.

IX.

For here the battle must be won,
'Mid noble aims of earnest life :
Tis here that each revolving sun
Will brace us for the coming strife.



LOOKING BACK.

OFt in his waking dreams there came
A certain semblance of the past ;
Like shadows crossed by tongues of flame,
Or misty veil o'er sunshine cast.

Forms in their outline incomplete,
Nor rounded by a workman's hand ;
Where false perspective's vistas meet,
And giant temples rest on sand.

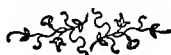
So 'tis at best a partial view
Of life's great stage that men obtain ;
Around lie fragments of the true,
And pleasure's light is crossed by pain.

For man's allotted journey lies
Beyond the valley and the hill ;
And all that meets his eager eyes
Is vexed by wand'ring phantoms still.

From passion free, the sage may look
On shifting cloud and blue expanse ;
Long has he studied Nature's book,
Ere that wide prospect meets his glance.

He looks, but feels his vigour gone,
For struggles in the stormy fight ;
And every prop he leans upon
Bears witness to declining might.

Yet some, in youth's all-conquering hour,
The boon of knowledge have obtained ;
Keen sight is joined to nervous power,
And life's stern victory is gained.



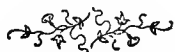
CONTRASTS.

WE oft for new horizons call,
And never pause to think how all
Vibrates round central plan—
As Time unwinds the mighty chain
Of mingled hope and joy and pain,
That binds the world to man.

Some are condemned to live alone,
And hear of life the undertone,
In murmurs from afar ;
From action all divorced they feel,
And watch the turning of the wheel
That moves the social car.

And some so busy are, they find
Gone the elastic spring of mind
And dulled perception's glass !
No longer able to enjoy,
As cares life's purer gold alloy,
And gloomy shadows pass !

Experience will tell us how
We best may utilize the Now,
 When, with concentrated rays,
All that we dream of high and bright
Is welded in the vivid light
 Of Wisdom's gathered days.



SPRING.

FIRST days of Spring, what bring ye to
the heart ?

What thoughts from higher spheres our
natures cross ?

In busy feeling's renovated part,

What shall we count as gain and what as loss ?

Restless, we muse, and wand'ring odours, cast

From ocean's waves, by secret thoughts are
stirred.

We dream of travel—of the changeful past :

Remembrance faintly throbs, like echo heard.

Yes ! suns as bright our eyes have seen before ;

Nature was mirrored in as pure a glow ;

And Memory points, through Time's half-
opened door,

Where forms we loved so well as shadows go.

And some are thinking of life's endless rush,
When chariots roll, and eager rivals strive :
Where obstacles the feebler natures crush,
But stronger frames at wished-for goal arrive.

Some think upon the priceless steed that wins
Just by a head, and saves a mighty stake ;
Others of love's entrancing hour, that spins,
Down flowery slope, to disappointment's lake.

Each has his vision ; but in nearly all,
Of self the mute gigantic spectre stands ;
Few pause to feel humanity's great call,
Or aid the struggling with assisting hands.

Yet selfish feelings work for Nature's plan :
Each grooves his path that in broad ways
unite ;
Society absorbs the complex man,
And narrow purpose tends to wider sight.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

GREAT Poet, in an age when much is small,
And action's meted by self-interest's rule—
Great Dramatist, evoking at his call
Indignant protests 'gainst corruption's school.

An Orator, whose voice with restless might,
Against Oppression's sway o'er act or thought,
Pleaded for nations' or for classes' right,
In accents not to be coerced or bought.

Artist of highest aim and genial powers,
Whether with mediæval life he deals,
And passion's struggles round the time-worn
towers,*
Or of our modern days the purport feels.

* Notre Dame de Paris.

With gen'rous instincts ever on the wing,
Apostle of a brighter future's day—
When ev'ry worker's toil reward shall bring,
When Freedom owns no laws' unequal sway.

His magic pen oft by a word conveys
Some vivid outline ne'er to be forgot :
The courtesan her new-born life portrays,
And true affection heals corruption's blot.*

When humble adoration rises till
A power divine alone its aims express,—
With fine gradations the Eternal Will
Bends down from Heaven a mortal love to bless.†

When, in December's day, so bright and cold,
All Paris thronged to see the ashes brought
Of him whose name was wreathed with glory's fold,
The Poet's voice expressed the general
thought.‡

* Marion de l'Orme.

“l'amour a refait ma virginité.”

† “Enfant, si j'étais Dieu.”

(Rayons et Ombres.)

‡ “Le jour fut rayonnant comme ta gloire.

Et froid, comme ton tombeau !”—1840.

And from the tribune when his accents fell,
All Europe caught the spark that burst in
flame ;
Such fiery words 'gainst all who Freedom sell,
Such withering scorn for slaves to Order's
name. (1849-51.)

Finer the lesson, when he tells us how
Man may be rescued from the depths of
crime ;
When laws before the great hereafter bow,
And penal fetters fall in riper time.
(“ Les Miserables.”)

Crowned with an aureole of poetic fire,
From rocky isle he looked with eagle's glance,
Till Paris called once more for him whose lyre
Immortal glory long had given to France.

Now, and in age, he stands among the few
Who cherish still the flame to genius given,
A life's perspective seen with clearer view,
With thoughts for freedom that have nobly
striven.

WISHES.

PERCHANCE 'tis good to wish for little, still
 Reposing in the haven of content—
 No call to feel to climb ambition's hill,
 Or view the world from fame's proud battle-
 ment.

Such longings rarely can our hopes fulfil :
 Phantoms, too oft, by adverse influence sent ;
 Yet most men wish to live a little longer,
 Or richer be, or handsomer, or stronger.

“ Ask for a mind that knows not fear of death.”
 So sang the Roman bard in noble verse,
 And high philosophy would waste its breath
 In telling us that many choose far worse.
 For prudence, child of sad experience, saith
 Let each day find, at hand, a well-filled purse.
 Men wish for luck in love, in trade, or sport,
 Some covet titles from a foreign Court.

A wish there is, that oft-times seems to be
Th' embodiment of much man should
desire ;

Old as the world its trite simplicity,
“ If youth but knew,” when full of strength
and fire.

Could one but life's perspective truly see,
Walk calmly on, with caution mounting
higher,
Shunned would be many a failure and surprise,
Whilst objects in their *just* proportion rise.

Some wish for leisure. 'Tis a priceless boon,
If its employment justly be conceived :
For chain of irksome task comes all too soon,
And fancy droops, of rainbow dreams
bereaved.

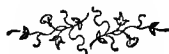
'Neath the bright sun of vigorous manhood's
noon,

What noble, lasting works may be achieved.
Grant but the wish ; how many lounge through
hours

With trifling that corrupts the mind's best
powers !

Man, it is true, is lord of every act,
Like faggots' bulk that grows from day to day,
Yet few will pause to estimate each fact,
When pleasure's rays in coruscations play.
Ask, then, for judgment to discern with tact,
And measure distances on life's broad way,
So, from time's mountain we may see more clear,
All we can do in outline sharp appear.

Ask for affection, rather than desire ;
For competence, than piles of hoarded gold ;
For a career that doth not rash aspire
To wild excitement, but will still unfold
Fresh lustre as it burns, with steady fire,
And firm set principles doth e'er uphold.
In short, be satisfied—you know the rest,
'Tis a trite lesson, moderation's zest.



PROVIDENCE.

I.

AMID the changes that convulse our earth
With throes of pain :
The earthquake's fearful rent ; the cyclone's
birth,
Or storm-tossed main :

II.

Sad were the lot of struggling man below,
If to his sense
Were not revealed, amid this ebb and flow,
God's Providence.

III.

Hard 'tis, in truth, to find destruction's law ;
Yet each must feel
How oft some unexpected turn he saw
In life's vast wheel.

IV.

Let faith then grow, like some wide-spreading
tree,
Whose branches give
Repose to wanderers who from tempests flee,
And learn to live.

V.

Then see, of earth, the shadows crossed with light
Beneath man's feet ;
Or upward glance to purer spheres of light,
Where angels greet.

VI.

A rainbow arc of aspirations pure
Links heaven to earth ;
Belief in good conducts by gradients sure
To higher birth.

VII.

And thus a faith in watchful Providence
Lulls all to rest,
And earnest hope replaces flickering sense
In mortal breast !

THE LAW OF KINDNESS

I.

THERE is a law which brighter shines
Than any code compiled by men ;
Traced to our sight in heavenly lines,
Unwrit by any mortal pen.

II.

A law that dates from that great day,
When on the " Mount " our Lord surveyed
The crowds whom He had taught to pray,
And to all time blest words conveyed.

III.

A law that bids us ceaseless strive
To seek the wretched, save the lost,
To keep the spark of hope alive,
Nor count the labour or the cost.

IV.

'Tis but a little we can do,
So vast the flood of misery,
'Tis but a fragment of the true,
“Leave *all*,” He said, and “follow Me.”

V.

To smooth all angered feelings down ;
At home, when jarring currents rise,
With smile of hope replace the frown,
As sunlight clears the clouded skies.

VI.

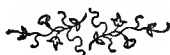
Endowed with prescience sublime,
Clearly, to eye of faith, appears,
Suspended o'er the gulf of time,
Millennium of the coming years.

VII.

The all-embracing reign of good,
And evil banished from the world,
All kinder feelings understood,
Whilst Christ's great banner is unfurled.

VIII.

For kindness is the seed that grows,
Later to spread a mighty tree ;
The source from where the river flows
Of universal Charity !



A FEW WORDS ON ELEGIAC METRE
(HEXAMETER AND PENTAMETER)
IN MODERN LANGUAGES.

MANY who have received what—notwithstanding dissentients—we must consider the privilege of a classical education, will recall, with delight, their first introduction to elegiac verse.

The somewhat monotonous roll of the simple Hexameter was so charmingly contrasted with the sharply accentuated fall of the Pentameter—the union of the two forming so perfect an alliance of masculine vigour with feminine softness—that the ear and sense were alike fully satisfied. Nor can such reproduction of classic models be compared with the rhymed Latin Hexameters so popular in the middle ages, although these *may* have been unduly depreciated by modern critics.

Within the last century the Germans have

the honour of naturalizing elegiacs in their own language. Klopstock, Voss, Zimmerman, Ruckert, and, above all, Göethe, brought this beautiful classic metre to the most perfect form of which a modern language was capable. Yet many doubt whether the adaptation was complete. Accents had to be shifted, and quantities arbitrarily changed. Yet, in spite of drawbacks, the victory was gained, and the modern elegiacs became world-renowned.

In recent times, Longfellow and the late Arthur Clough produced poems in simple Hexameters, which have attained a wide celebrity. And in his headings to the series of sketches, entitled "*Amours de Voyage*," the latter has given some graceful specimens of elegiac verse. These, indeed, have a sweetness and harmony which Clough's simple Hexameters do not always possess; for in his "*Bothy*" there are some fearfully rugged spondaic lines.

Enough has been done to show that our language does not impose any insuperable difficulty to smoothness and harmony in elegiac metre, and it may probably be more extensively

cultivated in the future. We now give some specimens from a contemporary *litterateur*, remarking that, if it be objected that quantities are arbitrarily used, the same objection applies, in some degree at least, to such masterpieces as Göethe's "Alexis" and his "Euphrosyne" :—

I.

Two stars shine on our birth ; when one is
extinguished the other
Dimmer and dimmer will grow, till it is lost to
our view.
When their lustre is gone, man sinks in the
billows of ocean,—
Honour's the name of one ; that of the other is
Truth.

II.

Once when a prince demanded what gift he
should offer the wise man ?
" Only," the latter replied, " out of my sunshine
to go."

True, and the chiefest boon that a State can
give to the worker,
Is when it leaves at his choice freedom to speak
and to act.

III.

Where is the mortal who deems his judgment
never can falter ?
Is he not here at his Club, looking through
window at life ?
Hollow and vain he declares are ardent hopes
that we cherish ;
'Tis so to him, for, in truth, hollow is all in his
heart.

IV.

Wise is the man who feels that wisdom oft may
be wanting
'Mid full glare of success, but *that it higher
remains.*
Foolish he who seeks to scorn the natural
pleasures,
Holding glory a dream, love a delusion and
snare ;

Friendship, too costly a thing for prudent men
to invest in ;
Woman's affection, a ware that can be purchased
at will.

v.

When wine sparkles in glass, and your neighbour
is specially charming,
Launching sparks from her eye, that in the fancy
remain,
Happy the moments will pass ; but, sure as the
sun of to-morrow
Rises, reaction will come—pain of the head or
the heart.
Shall we, then, fly from the halls where Bacchus
the rosy is worshipped,
Or where the Paphian Queen kindles the flame
of desire ?
No ! for 'tis better to smart than to pine in a
mouldering cloister,
Where no wine-cup invites, nor the sweet lips
of the fair.

VI.

Great is of Nature the gift to enjoy and reflect
on enjoyment,
Climb some steps of the stair to the ideal that
leads,
Leaving below the mists that cloud the valley
of effort,
Clearer feeling the air wafted from mountain of
Truth.

VII.

Death is the shadow of life, but shadows wait
upon sunshine ;
Why, if we bask in the one, shall we the other
decry ?
Each forms part of a plan which gives to mortals
endeavour,
Will, and passions, and then limits the term of
their sway.
Travel the wise enjoy, but, viewing the end of
the journey,
Calmly await their time under the hill to repose.

VIII.

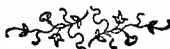
Happy is he who works, and after working re-
poses,
Thus fulfilling the plan given to man at his birth,
Every year to feel he's reached to a level that's
higher,
Nearer scenting the breeze blowing from hill-top
of Fame.

IX.

Wide as the circle may seem of passion, will,
and endeavour,
When we in youth survey all the horizon of life :
Older, the space contracts with each ripe year
that is passing,
Till there remains at the last only a couch and a
grave.

After all, these experiments are but tentative. They may be welcomed as such by those who believe that the combinations of language are, like notes in music, susceptible of infinite variety and change. In the vast and gorgeous

temple of the world's poesy, such tiny mosaics may, in some retired nook, excite a sympathetic feeling among the crowd of worshippers at the greater shrines.



THE NEW YEAR, 1883.

A GAIN another year has fled,
 The seasons varied gifts have shed
 Their balm on man's career ;
 Passions have struggled, parties fought,
 And rival chiefs in turn have sought
 The Nation's bark to steer.

Life trickles on, in countless rills,
 Down to that urn immense, which fills
 Of man the destiny.
 Beyond there lies the magic haze
 That veils the slope of future days,
 Whose limits none can see.

For death is there with aspect pale,
 Armed with the darts that never fail,
 Indubitable fact :
 All else may change, that cloud remains,
 The Monarch's crown, the captive's chains,
 Prelude the final act.

Yet, still, the coming year shall meet,
The interests that, converging, greet
 The wanderer on his way ;
Joy, sorrow, tears, or laughter seem
Like visions of a passing dream,
 Or moonbeams, lustrous play.

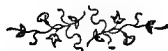
When gone each fragrant season's bloom,
When falls December's gathered gloom,
 'Mid fog, or snow, or rain ;
May memories of a brighter past,
Like summer's sunshine onward cast,
 Lead us to hope again.

Yet eddies still the careless throng,
And mirth and jest are passed along,
 Joy lights its torch to-night ;
The ball-room holds its whirling crowd,
The drama wakens plaudits loud,
 Gems flash upon the sight.

Still presses on the ardent youth,
For him is caged, in simple truth,

That fluttering bird, To-day.
The older man has seen it fly,
Glancing perchance with tear-dimmed eye,
And watched it course away.

Strong beats the pulse, resolve is set,
And will by will conflicting met,
Closes in party strife ;
Yet as they struggle in the fray,
But few, beyond the smoke, survey
The inmost core of life.



ON THE BIRTH OF A DAUGHTER,
THE 5TH JULY, 1883.

I.

O CHOICEST of bright summer days,
When Nature all her wealth displays,
Poured on the grateful earth ;
What vision girt with purest light,
Descends to bless our anxious sight ?
An infant's longed-for birth.

II.

This tiny barque shall floated be,
On life's unfathomable sea,
Ne'er to regain the shore ;
And, as we hail its onward course,
We ask a blessing at the source
Of Nature's boundless store !

III.

The ancients brought their offerings rare
Gods to propitiate, who share
The balanced scales of Fate ;
And many a bust with wreaths was crowned,
What time the wine cup circled round,
While friends expectant wait.

IV.

We ask not dazzling fortune's crown,
Or beauty such as few can own,
To mortal features given ;
Rather a sweet content of mind,
A heart to others' failings blind,
Thoughts that have upwards striven !

V.

Oh ! may this blossom bloom a flower,
Nourished by light, refreshed by shower,
In life's fair garden placed ;
May its expanding form recall
Visions that soft at eve-tide fall,
Hopes on Time's ground plan traced !

VI.

Child, girl, or woman, may her life
Flow onwards free from passion's strife,
 Graced by affection's smile :
May each year bring from virtue's store,
As gift, one priceless jewel more,
 As thought matures the while.

VII.

Stand on reflection's slope ; survey
The teeming interests of to-day,
 A torrent's foaming force ;
All here begins, the cradle lies,
Problem for man's enquiring eyes,
 Of mighty stream the source !

VIII.

For generations come and pass,
 Each holds aloft that shifting glass
 In which life's fragments lie ;
Each has its wishes, hopes, and fears,
Its vivid joys, its secret tears,
 Its thoughts that cannot die !

DAY OF BAPTISM, 7TH SEPT., 1883.

I.

HAIL to the day that's now begun !
 We pray that this revolving sun
 May bathe our souls in light ;
 Disturbing thoughts away be cast,
 All weary cares renounced and past,
 Whilst hopes our hearts unite.

II.

For now a message hath been sent,
 Of peace and joy and full content,
 Enshrined in infant's form :
 Of innocence the spotless bloom,
 A ray of light athwart life's gloom,
 Arc that survives the storm.

III.

And now has dawned that blessed day,
Wherein with earnest minds we pray
For purity and peace.
Pray that one soul untouched remain
By wayward passion's galling chain,
Or cares that never cease.

IV.

The Mediæval Church is there,
And voices blend in earnest prayer,
Where generations trod ;
The mystic rite is finished now,
And cross impressed on infant's brow,
Unites a soul to God.

V.

The hour of birth and baptism's day,
What varied thoughts that idly play,
May on this theme unite,
The One that gives us all to see,
And that ordained to set us free
From evil Nature's blight.

VI.

In vain, alas, are many born
Whose follies hold them up to scorn,
 With every noble mind ;
Years spent in fashion's idle joy,
No thought life's precious gifts t' employ,
 To virtuous action blind.

VII.

For each that to this font is brought,
We pray that every purer thought
 May, as life's billows roll,
Be cherished to increase the store
Of plants that bloom on Virtue's shore
 And elevate the soul.

VIII.

Grant then, O Lord, Thy crowning grace
O may each infant's blooming face
 Be mirror of a mind ;
Earnest in works of good to share,
Zealous in act, entranced by prayer,
 To all Thy will resigned !

LINES ON A YOUNG GIRL WHO
DIED IN HER 12TH YEAR.

I.

SO soon departed ! yet that vision bright
Seems with us still :
The lines traced by that "phantom of delight"
Our memory fill.

II.

Loved was she from the time when first she lay
By mother's side ;
As thankful hearts marked the auspicious day
In radiance glide.

III.

Hushed are the tones that sympathies awake
With infants' call,
As though some deeper voice from Nature spake
And hallowed all.

IV.

And, later, when unfolding childhood brought
 Beauty and grace,
 Each year some fresh attraction still we sought
 In that dear face.

V.

For mirrored there in magic lines there grew
 Intelligence ;
 The beautiful engrafted on the true
 With ripening sense.

VI.

Ten years had flown, and still we watched the
 flower
 With earnest pride :
 On it was poured affection's priceless dower,
 And all beside.

* * * * *

VII.

Let fall the curtain, vainly man demands
 Respite from fate ;
 Vain all the struggles of weak human hands,
 Early or late.

VIII.

Of destiny none can by force unlock
The brazen door.

“What must be, shall be,” and grief’s tearful
shock

Comes evermore.

IX.

Canst thou arrest the eagle’s towering flight,
The cyclone’s force ;

Or quench the rays from central fount of light,
That ceaseless course ?

X.

Stand, then, aside, accepting all that falls
From Nature’s law.

While listing to her mystic voice which calls
In sounds of awe.

XI.

So mayst thou see again visions in air
Of brighter hue ;

Some rainbow tints, which glancing past despair,
Reflect the true.

XII.

All is not lost, fresh springs the fount of hope
From Time's scarred rock ;
Fresh bloom the flowers where lately none could
cope
With tempest's shock.

XIII.

Again, perchance, may beauty's lines unite
In radiant form ;
Again an infant's face, serenely bright,
Beam through the storm.

XIV.

Nature's deep bosom with fresh increase swells—
Joy comes again !
In human breasts no feeling constant dwells—
Pleasure or pain.

XV.

Why then, O man, thy petty shadow take
To measure life ;
Sorrow and joy shall shade or sunshine make—
Peace conquer strife.

XVI.

Birth, life, and death extend to utmost verge
Of Nature's plan :
Whilst rolls for ever Time's unresting surge,
Surrounding man.

XVII.

Greatest or humblest then alike must bow
To laws of fate.
How vain to seek the whence, the why, or how,
Of mortal state.

XVIII.

Thrice happy who have found the wise and true,
Whilst yet they live.
Mists veil no more of duty's path the view,
If zeal we give.

* * * * *

XIX.

On Nature's bosom place this slender form,
Supremely blest ;
Saved from the wreck-strewn beach of life's
great storm,
In hallowed rest.

MEDITATIONS ON DEATH.

No. 1.

PERCHANCE 'tis best to die alone,
 On some hill slope we oft have trod,
 Listening to Nature's softer tone,
 With reverence looking up to God!

For oh, how little can be done
 By friends who ministering stand :
 Man leaves for aye life's cheerful sun,
 He sees, through mists, a shadowy land.

Nor can the formulas of creeds
 True solace to the mind convey,
 In hour supreme the spirit needs
 Assurance of a brighter day.

Some sentiment of the divine
 Ethereal presence, girt with light,
 As round our wandering footsteps shine
 The starry glories of the night.

The warm routine of life that throws
Its network round the circling day,
The table's cheer, the fire that glows,
The calls of leisure, work, or play.

The family and friends who weave
That web, through which affection's light
So kindly beams, all we must leave,
And Nature's varying aspects bright.

Life's landscape, then, must one day fade,
But how do men the prospect view ?
The greater part, their life-path made,
The busy tasks of time pursue,

And few the universal scheme
Of Nature to be best allow ;
"If all must die," why should it seem
So hard to tread that pathway *now*.

If some are happy; and enjoy
The vigorous spring of constant health,
How many biting cares annoy,
How close does misery dwell to wealth !

How sharply can the passions sting,
Ambition's fall, the dread recoil,
When snapped is energy's frail spring,
And blighted lie the fruits of toil !

Shall we then hesitate to go,
Where all who strove have gone before ?
The hero with his plume of snow,
The sage endowed with wisdom's store ;

The Captains of the ancient days ;
The high philosophers who taught
Truth to explore, 'mid error's maze,
And knowledge by experience bought !

Yet humbly must we own that few
Have shaken off the chains of sense,
Or pleasure's welcome calls subdue,
For that dim future's dread suspense.

No. 2.

Life's stream that bubbled on its course,
Now turns aside from mortal eye,
And spent its onward gushing force,
Leaves but a bed with gravel dry.

'Tis sad to wait mid lingering pain,
The moment of a last farewell,
To hear the creaking of Time's chain,
And gloomy waters' mournful swell.

Saddest when clouds of deep regret,
Environ the last hours of life,
And vainly striving to forget,
The mind recalls blend passion's strife. *i/*

When evil's ensign was displayed,
And virtue's temple lost to view,
The turning point where choice was made,
And the false triumphed o'er the true.

The force that bounteous Nature gave,
Lavished on brief excitement's day.
No hand that vessel's course to save,
Which drifts, dismasted wreck, away.

No. 3.

Birth, Marriage, Death, in triple union hold,
As in a vase, the precious juice of life :
Simple yet mystic emblems which enfold
Limits of mortal happiness or strife.

The drop minute that falls like cloud-sent rain
Increases yearly, till it foams in force ;
Yet adverse influences fraught with pain,
Subdue its efforts in its onward course.

At length, with volume lessened, it departs,
Evaporated 'neath Time's ardent ray—
Its sad decline mourned by congenial hearts,
Where fled we know not, yet forbid to stay.

By the same law that first distilled the drop,
Floats the exhausted vapour on its way.
The vision fades, life's pulses sudden stop,
No more to wanton in their vigorous play.

No. 4.

To die in love's embrace on summer's day,*
Or, as the statesman called for scents and
flowers,†
Or when the guillotine in shadow lay,
With wine and oysters to beguile the hours.‡

All these are fruits of philosophic mind,
Lifted above vain superstitious fears,
Yet certain incompleteness here we find,
If death close not the door on joy and tears.

Rather we follow where that youth still leads,
Who, with his torch extinguished,§ beckons on,
Not dropped to earth, but kept for future need,
To flame once more, when brighter life is won.

* Ovid Amor. 2, 10. † Mirabeau. ‡ Duc de Biron.

§ Greek symbol of death.

ON THE FIRST HOUR OF A
NEW YEAR.

I.

THE year is gone, alas ! what varied projects
with it die,
What schemes whose ruined scaffoldings around
disjointed lie ;
How many efforts all in vain, how many hopes
deceived,
And hearts that hailed its opening dawn, now
silent and bereaved.

II.

How many who, a year gone by, rode high on
fortune's wave,
Now seek some plank whereon they may their
all from ruin save ;

And others, who were climbing up ambition's
slippery stair,
Lie prostrate and inert beneath the whelming
flood of care.

III.

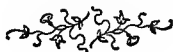
Death has its harvest reaped and left sad voids
no joy can fill,
Deep rolls time's flood o'er many a wreck ; loved
voices now are still,
And weeping eyes refuse to greet the gladsome
morning light,
Earth's landscape blooms no longer fair upon
their sorrowing sight.

IV.

Not so to all, a birth has come with promise
bright and fair,
Some infant voice has sounded in the still, crisp,
morning air ;
A mother's lips have joyful kissed the new
developed form,
Whilst tear-drops bathed in light remain, last
relics of the storm.

v.

Away sad thoughts, the year is born, its opening
day we hail,
Oh may the cause of right and truth in life's
great fight prevail ;
Our heart beats firm with confidence as through
the silent night
We view the star of hope on high, and wait
returning light.



ON HEARING A LADY SING.

I.

OFTEN as men have praised
The magic power of sound,
When voices heavenward raised,
Dispense its gifts around ;
Yet somewhat there remains to say
Of that bright gift which charms life's day.

II.

Sing, like the joyous bird,
Whose untaught accents thrill,
At morn or evening heard,
Or at the noon-tide still—
Where some majestic forest "heaves
In air its wilderness of leaves."

III.

Sing, as the child of Art,
When many a studious hour
Doth finished grace impart,
And vivifying power,—
Till strains divine men's hearts enthral,
The "Queen of Song" acclaimed by all.

IV.

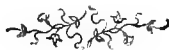
Sing, when the heart is glad,
And all things seem to say,
That nothing mean or sad
Can touch our lives to-day.
We walk in youth's exultant power,
Naught seems too great for that glad hour.

V.

Oh! sing, when sorrow's near,
Its shadow creeping still,
And clouds with aspect drear,
Our life's horizon fill.
That voice leads to remembrance shore
And forms that we behold no more.

VI.

Sing, then, that song again ;
The echoes softly fall,
So precious is the strain,
We would its charm recall.
Sing, and disperse those clouds of life
Which linger in their lurid strife.



L'ANGE ET L'ENFANT.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF REBOUL.)

IN radiance bright an angel clad,
Beside an infant's cot reclining,
Saw of its form the image laid
As on some streamlet's surface shining.

"Sweet infant, come," that angel said,
"Oh come with me my lot to share ;
Partake of bliss, immortal made—
Earth has no claims for one so fair.

"Here are no pleasures constant found ;
Joy seems on sorrow's confines creeping ;
Its accents breathe a mournful sound,
As though for friends departed weeping.

"Fear steals along the festal hall :
No day so bright but that the morrow,
As winds obey the tempest's call,
May see its sun go down in sorrow.

“ Shall troubled thoughts or worldly care
Deform that brow where calmness lies ?
Shall tears which sorrow's anguish share
Bedim the light of those sweet eyes ?

“ No ! soaring to the realms of bliss,
Thou shalt my lov'd companion be ;
Heaven in its mercy grants thee this,
And cancels future woes for thee.

“ Let none throughout thy cherished home
For thee the garb of mourning wear ;
May thy last hour as joyful come,
As when thy face first beamed so fair.

“ No clouded brow around be seen,
Nor sigh of sorrow mingled there :
For purity like thine I ween
The latest moments happiest are.”

And so that angel took his flight,
Each radiant wing in air outspread,
To mansions of eternal light.
Mother be calm—thy babe is dead !

LA MORT.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF MADAME TASTU.)

JUST entering on the voyage of life,
 The infant smiles on future years ;
 Death looms afar in cloudy strife,—
 In the dim distance he appears.
 The babe sees not this fleeting shade,
 To mother's eye apparent made ;
 But smiles in innocent delight,
 His morn dreams not of coming night.

Death, too, is there when childhood's day
 (While sands run swiftly from time's glass),
 On couch of pain, no longer gay,
 Sees that veiled form in silence pass :
 Through many a solitary hour,
 A vague inquietude will lower,
 And on that spectre fix the eyes—
 Later that veil obscure will rise.

There comes an hour to trustful youth,
When roseate hope no more appears,
An hour of pain, when sorrow's truth
Brings to our eyes the first sad tears !
The world is to our eyes laid bare,
And death, perchance, appeareth fair,
In angel's form, sublime and vast,
A veil of mourning round him cast.

With palest flowers his brow is crowned,
And like a friend he draweth near,
No aspects dread his form surround.
Life's torch, that erst shone out so clear,
Now prone on earth extinguished lies ;
At death's command our suffering flies ;
With hope each feature now is gleaming
Pointing where light celestial's beaming.

In noon-day sun of life we bask,
And then, the morning's vapour gone,
He wears no more the angel's mask ;
The clouds disperse ; death stands alone,

Approaching still, we more do fear,
For the world's treasures now are dear ;
Rank, fame, success, our minds enthrall ;
Must, then, this spectre seize them all ?

Years pass, the vision meets our eye,
Soon to survey our journey's end,
And as the sweeping shadows fly,
That eve with morn no more to blend,
Our steps are slow, from care and years,
Death, stealing light from life, appears ;
His awful blow dense vapours hide
And yet we feel him by our side.

* * * * *

Friends who have loved my humble strain,
Welcome these rays from truth's bright
star,—
A woman's hour of joy or pain,
Undestined to be known afar.
Yet on these lines of earnest thought,
May rest a sympathizing eye,
The mind by life's experience taught,
May softly echo—all must die !

THE KING OF THE SEVEN MOUNTAINS.*

(A LEGEND—FROM THE GERMAN.)

I.

THERE reigned a King in Rhineland, his
name no more is known,—
The good old King they called him, in country
and in town.
Seven hills with castles owned his sway, seven
children had he there,—
And 'neath the sun no youths more brave, no
maidens were more fair.

II.

He mounted oft, the kindly man, with knights
of noble race !
At cottage door, each child knew well that brave
old monarch's face ;

* Near Kœnigswenter, on the Rhine.

And when, at length, his life's last hour he felt
 was drawing near,
Seven gallant Counts transported him to the
 highest mountain there,

III.

From whence his eye ranged o'er the land where
 sunlight brightly glowed—
Through which, with rolling flood, the Rhine in
 course majestic flowed—
He marked the mountain's outlines, as in
 glorious light they lay,
And the verdant grassy valleys, steeped in the
 bloom of May ;

IV.

He saw the towers and churches, with their
 pinnacles so proud,
Glancing above the rolling stream, like rocks
 o'er ocean's flood,
And there he sat him gently down 'till evening's
 twilight came,
And his brave old heart with gladness filled,
 though weak his feeble frame.

V.

He spake, "Thou noble river, whose restless
wave still flows ;
In truth, the fairest stream art thou on which
the sunlight rose,
And to leave thee now, for ever, is the sorest
pang to me,
Ere I go beyond the grave to join my valiant
ancestry.

VI.

"With noble hearts around thee, thou deep and
rapid Rhine,
Farewell, may Heaven's own purest ray for ever
on thee shine."
He bless'd the land and people, in the eve's
last gleam of light,
Too strong was the emotion, for his brave heart
broke outright.
Such is the ancient legend, his name no more is
known,
But his blessing rests on Rhineland, with the
aged King's renown.

REPOSE IN DEATH.

(FROM ESPRONCEDA.)

AN islet of repose am I,
Amid life's ocean cast,
As storm-tossed mariners descry,
The tempest stilled and past.

There, unto slumbers deep invite
The noiseless, limpid stream,
And waveless breath of Zephyr light.
I am the flick'ring beam

That falls on brows oppressed with care
In full unconscious sleep ;
What time, my shadowy wings of air,
Their careful vigils keep.

The mystic virgin queen am I,
Of last and purest love ;
My elect on flower-strewn couches lie,
All thorns my hands remove.

There, hushed is care, no doubt can reach,
Disputes are heard no more ;
Secrets of import deep I teach,
And mysteries explore.

Come, and repose thy fevered head,
Thy dreams shall tranquil be,
In regions of pure calm thy bed,
From noise and tumult free.

Far from the strife of men, from lies
That still deceive the crowd,
False joys and hopes of victories,
Which but illusions shroud !

